

"Toksha ake wacinyanktin ktelo... I shall see you again."
White Buffalo Calf Woman

Song of the Buffalo Hunt

Red River carts groaned, squelching and squeaking as the Métis came across the prairie on the annual bison hunt, laughing and singing, despite ever-present danger of Indian attack or worse - such as if when out-riding scouts brought back no word of finding herds for buffalo herds were diminishing and life was getting tough since frontiersmen depended upon the great shaggy beasts for life. But the scouts spotted a large herd and all the hunters lined up to charge - and woe the man who jumped the Chief's command to attack the beasts. The wild thunder of the panicked buffalo herd loud resounded... uncountable beast's deadly hooves drumming the earth, filling the sky with the cruel song of the bold chase as the Métis plainsmen charged... the mighty beasts snorted and blew snot from their wild-flaring nostrils; great shaggy creatures capable of jumping up to six feet high, bellowing and fierce kicking as they flailed their sharp horns, crazed with dread fear, stomping the dirt to dust in desperate plight. The buffalo herd quick put into instinctive race for life. Old muskets crack and shotguns blast as the riders gaily storm the herd. The wounded cries of the dying monsters sang out to music of guns which filled the air - full of thick dust - with the metallic smell of blood. The lives of the brave half-breed men depended upon trusted ponies for shouldst one fall into the midst of the frightened herd in its flight, they'd surely be stomped into a bloody mush - trampled to death. In the riotous frenzy there was no room to make any mistakes... the hunt was more than a struggle to survive - 'twas a rite of manhood. Letting horses run free, riders stormed midst the dangerous mass... free hands grabbed black powder from pockets as the men spat iron balls, which they carried loose in their mouths, into hot-smoking gun barrels, slamming down the rifle stock against their thighs to set the shot to shoot. Throwing kerchiefs, gloves or other personal markers down on kills - to prove their claims of having shot beasts upon which their lives depended. Then, as quickly as the madness had begun... it soon ceased. The hunt was done, but for fading shots as hunters put still-writhing animals at peace. Tired men then took time to rest - gladdened with a successful hunt. Here and there, a grizzled old chin sported a pipe and trailed smoke which rose up into blue heavens - the expanse of the prairie sky wherein the white orb of the sun bright-rained down warmth pon happy folk. Young Indian women and girls ran about for joy, sharp knives in hand, and began the hard work of cutting the meat in strips to dry or shredding meat and lard into sacks full of berries and herbs making pemmican - long-lasting and worth more than gold to them.